



***By Carolyn Lee
The Imperial Republican***

Little boys “oohed and aahed” while adults tried out the seats in the Health One’s AirLife Denver jet Friday, when it made a stop in Imperial. The Lear 31 jet was parked at the airport for two hours to acquaint the public with the hospital flight service.

Operated by International Jet Aviation out of Centennial Airport in Denver, the Lear jet can fly at speeds of up to 500 miles per hour, making a trip to Imperial in 29 minutes, according to Chief Pilot Rod Champney.

He said a patient can be in a Denver hospital in two hours from the time a doctor in Imperial makes the initial call for a flight.

It takes 20 minutes for the jet to become airborne after a call is received. The crews are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The maximum ceiling is 15,000 feet, and Champney said it takes 10-12 minutes to achieve altitude.

Two pilots are required to staff the jet. On the flight to Imperial, and later to Grant, Matt Fishback was the other pilot.

Champney said it takes about four minutes to fly from Imperial to Grant.

Two registered nurses also make the flight when it is needed. Champney said that depending upon the type of injury or health concern of the patient, the RNs taken specialize in neonatal,

stroke, trauma or other areas.

Health One's AirLife Denver operates within a 400 mile radius of Denver. Champney said he flies all over Colorado and Wyoming, and parts of Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, New Mexico and South Dakota.

Trauma and stroke patients are transferred to Swedish Medical Center in Englewood. Pediatric, obstetric and neonatal patients go to Presbyterian/St. Luke's in Denver.

Champney said there is space for "a couple of family members" to ride along with the patient, which isn't usually possible when using ground transportation.



Health One owns two Lear 31 jets and three helicopters. When a patient is flown to Denver, the helicopter then transports him or her to the hospital, bypassing ground traffic.

Champney said the jets, which replaced older ones in July, fly 450 missions per year, or one to two flights per day.

The helicopters fly 2,000-2,500 missions per year, or six to eight each day.

A new Lear 31 jet costs \$6-7 million, he said.

Health One has been in service for 25 years. Chase County Community Hospital Administrator Lola Jones said the hospital has contracted with Health One for many years.

CCCH also utilizes Eagle Med of Hays, Kan. to fly patients to hospitals in Nebraska and Colorado. Jones noted that Eagle Med cannot land on a wet runway, while the AirLife jets are equipped with GPS navigation systems, which allow them to land in varying weather conditions.

CCCH also contracts with Good Samaritan Hospital of Kearney for helicopter services. On rare occasions, a plane is used to transfer patients to the Scottsbluff hospital.

Jones said "we find the fastest one to the closest place," for air ambulance service.